



## 6TH DISTRICT UPDATE

December 2004

### ***Fearey's First Edition***

During the past several months, there has been much discussion and debate regarding the Genesis Health Club request and subsequent sending of a Letter of Intent for the issuance of Industrial Revenue Bonds (IRBs), the accompanying sales tax exemption, and 50% property tax abatement for the period of 5 years.

There are several facts that not everyone may be aware of. IRBs themselves have few financial benefits and carry no risk to the city taxpayers. The bonds are sold on the bond market and the purchaser assumes the risk. It is the tax exemptions and rebates that provide the advantage. The new facility that will be built is not in the City of Wichita. Therefore, Wichita will not lose any taxes from the property tax abatement on that property. The tax abatement for the Socorro and the 13<sup>th</sup> Street facilities will only be based on the added value, not the entire value of the property. That means the City is not losing tax money it already receives; rather, it is receiving only ½ the new tax receipts for a period of five years.

The request was approved because of two facts. One was that the request met the policy of the City that had been in existence and relied upon for many years. The second was that staff recommended the approval of the IRBs based on that policy.

The Council determined from the discussion surrounding this issue that our IRB policy needed to be updated in order to keep up with the transition of the economy from a manufacturing base to a service base. We requested that the Greater Wichita Economic Development Council develop and present a new policy recommendation to the Council taking this transition into account.

On November 16, 2004, the revised Economic Development Incentive Policy was adopted. It contains a new matrix that will be used in determining the recommendation for the issuance of IRBs and tax abatements. The sales tax savings is now also spelled out in the Council green sheets so that we are aware of the cost of issuing the IRBs and the accompanying sales tax exemption. Up until this time, most council members were unaware that this was part of the approval of the IRBs.

When the new Wichita City Manager was hired, the Genesis IRBs that had been approved were still a controversial issue. After discussing it with him numerous times, I realized that I had made a mistake with my vote. These IRBs and the accompanying tax breaks would bring no new wealth to our city and should not have been approved. I said as much from the Council bench on November 16.

I still feel that I made a mistake with the first approval. However, between that meeting and the meeting of December 7, 2004, I visited with many people about what action should be taken regarding the Letter of Intent. Although several felt that we should withdraw the Letter, others felt that this could possibly hurt future economic development efforts, because lending institutions base their financing of projects on such Letters. I did not want to do anything that would compound a mistake that I had made into a much worse situation for the economic vitality of Wichita.

Shortly before the December 7 meeting, Council was informed that the original information we received was not complete. The cost/benefits ratio provided on our staff report did not include the Maize School District. Since they would be losing future property taxes because of the property tax abatement, they must be notified and included as part of the public hearing before City Council. Therefore, the analysis must be completed and this issue must come back to City Council for a vote.

The above is the information that I took into consideration in making my statements, my decision, and my vote at the December 7, 2004 Council meeting:

- I voted to go ahead and issue the Letter of Intent for the IRBs and the accompanying sales tax exemption since that request met the conditions of the policy that was in effect at that time.
- By issuing the IRBs, the city will be honoring its Letter of Intent and will not put any future economic development projects at risk.

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Happy Holidays

#### ***Special points of interest:***

- *IRBs themselves have few financial benefits and carry no risk to the city taxpayers*
- *Negotiating of Railbanking*
- *Cutting out Domestic Violence*
- *The fight that injured two Wichita police officers*

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## **CENTRAL RAIL CORRIDOR**

At the City Council meeting of December 14, the council is scheduled to vote on the agreement between the city and the Union Pacific RR (UPRR) that will allow for the construction of the Central Elevated Rail Corridor. The agreement spells out the relocation of the UPRR to the new corridor over tracks and right-of-way owned by the Burlington Northern (BNSF). This will result in the abandonment of the existing UPRR tracks from Central to near 11<sup>th</sup> Street North. The existing UPRR Bridge over the Chisholm Creek will be widened to accommodate additional track storage for the RR. The agreement will allow the city to move forward with the construction of the project while the UPRR and BNSF continue to negotiate a required operational agreement.

Some of the proposed public artwork that was designed as part of the project may have to be scaled back to hold down costs. The input of the city's Design Council was instrumental in selecting the artwork and has been instrumental in helping the City Council decide what elements need to be retained in order to have a utilitarian project that is also visually enhancing to the city. The "living wall" of plants that was to grow along the wall will most likely be replaced with a climbing plant that will still maintain a "green wall" look while cutting down on the problem of graffiti.

This project has been on the city's plate since 1995. It is great to see it finally reach a point of getting started. Many councils and a lot of city staff have been responsible for getting the project to this point. It will be exciting for everyone to see it completed.

### **EL PASO REFINERY**

The El Paso Refinery, known to many as the Derby Refinery on 21<sup>st</sup> Street just west of I-135 announced their plans for demolition and remediation at the refinery site. Demolition efforts should start in early 2005 and be completed by the end of next year. The removal of the structure will be a very visible statement of the possibilities for revitalization of the 21<sup>st</sup> Street corridor. After the site has been cleared, the city will work with El Paso officials on future plans for the site.

The remediation of the site is being conducted under the auspices of the Kansas Dept. of Health and Environment. Over 100 monitoring wells have been installed and sampling and monitoring is conducted quarterly. Daily maintenance and control of seepage into nearby canals is performed. Construction activities for the containment project are anticipated in late 2005 or early 2006. Monitoring and remediation activities will need to continue over many years, but will not interfere with being able to redevelop the site into something compatible with the area and the 21<sup>st</sup> Street Plan.



### **SALONS OF HOPE**

The Wichita Police Department and YWCA Wichita have worked together for years in the battle to fight domestic violence. They are now offering a new program called Salons of Hope: Cutting Out Domestic Violence.

The goal of the program is to make the area salons a safe place where victims of domestic violence can receive information and resources for help. The initiative will train salon professionals in recognizing patterns of domestic abuse in their clientele. The professionals will be able to supply resource and referral information to their clients including phone numbers, local resources, and shelters for domestic violence programs.

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- The issue of the property tax abatement with regard to the Maize School District is new information that was not provided to the Council before the new Economic Development policy was adopted.
- I will review the property tax abatement issue in light of the new policy. Under that policy, Genesis will not qualify for property tax abatements and I will vote accordingly.

As I have said several times during this difficult process, serving as a City Council representative gives me the opportunity to learn new things each and every day. It is a humbling experience to learn some of these things after a vote has been cast, but I continue to try to study the issues and cast the best vote I can with the information I have available.

*Please continue to let me hear from you. Your issues and concerns are important to me.  
Have a Joyous Holiday and Happy New Year!  
Sharon*



## Wichita Radio Reading Service—*Someone you know may need our help*

Wichita Radio Reading Service covers southern Kansas and Northern Oklahoma with 24/7 readings of national and local newspapers, magazines and other publications. We provide our service free for anyone who cannot read with ease 14 point type due to visual, physical or cognitive handicaps.

Many of our current listeners have been with us since 1975 when the service began, but we know there are many out there who just don't know about us!

If you hear of anyone who could use the service please let us know. Many area residents can no longer enjoy reading the printed word due to vision, physical or cognitive disorders.

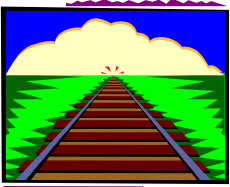
It is easy to sign up, we just need an application filled out with name and address and verification from caretaker or medical professional of the need for service. We then mail out a closed circuit radio which is pre-turned to WRRS and the listener is all set.

There is no charge, we are funded through WSU, grants and donations and our readers are all local volunteers.

Giving our listeners back the local connection to grocery ads, local news, obits and other items is a simple way to improve their connection to their community. We also have a speaker's bureau and are available to speak to any area group (again no fee).

For more information on obtaining this FREE service, contact the following: WRRS-- (316) 978-7053 or email at [jones@kmuw.org](mailto:jones@kmuw.org). Help us help others

## RAILBANKING BURLINGTON NORTHERN AND SANTA FE



On Tuesday, December 14, the City Council is expected to approve the negotiation of railbanking with BNSF from 45<sup>th</sup> Street near Park City to west of Meridian in Valley Center.

The 21<sup>st</sup> Street Revitalization Corridor Plan proposes the realignment of the BNSF mainline and rail yard activities from its current location along Broadway to the existing Frisco main that is also owned by BNSF. This recommendation in the proposed 21<sup>st</sup> Street Plan would shift the railroad activities away from Broadway and be a part of a solution to limit the number of rail-street at-grade crossings in North-Central Wichita.

The BNSF RR is proposing to abandon nearly six miles of tracks between Wichita and Valley Center. This RR easement can be preserved by formally railbanking this corridor. This preserves the future option of moving trains more efficiently and safely through North-Central Wichita.

### MIDTOWN REZONING INITIATIVE IN FULL SWING

The Midtown Neighborhood, bounded by 18<sup>th</sup> Street on the north, the rail lines on the east, Murdock Street on the south, and the little Arkansas River on the west, is ready to take it's rezoning proposal to the MAPC for a public hearing. Written notification, accompanied by map sets showing the proposed zoning change (if any) for each parcel, will be sent to each property owner. At the December 23 MAPC meeting, a public hearing will be scheduled (most likely for January 27<sup>th</sup> no earlier than 1:30 pm). A final recommended rezoning plan will be presented at that hearing. In this plan, any property owner who so chooses can "opt out" of having their property rezoned. No property will be rezoned to a more intensive use.

### *Zoning Denied For Nightclub*



The 6<sup>th</sup> District Advisory Board, the Metropolitan Area Planning Commission

(MAPC) and the City Council voted to deny a nightclub proposal at 21<sup>st</sup> and Hood. The neighbors made a very effective case against this amendment. This location has been a nightclub type facility in the past and has had serious problems including a fight that injured two of Wichita's police officers.

Evergreen Neighborhood City Hall  
2700 N. Woodland  
Suite D  
Wichita, Ks 67204  
Phone: 316-303-8042  
Fax: 316-303-8049



It's That Time of Year again,

**Evergreen Neighborhood City Hall** will be offering AARP Tax Assistance. This is the fourth year we have offered FREE Tax preparation with electronic filing for anyone who qualifies. Tax preparation will start on Tuesday, February 1, 2005. **The tax volunteers will not be here till Feb. 1st** but you can start calling our office in January to make your tax appointment. The phone number is 316-303-8042.



## ***Breakfast with Sharon***

Please join Sharon Fearey, 6th District City Council Representative for coffee or breakfast (Dutch Treat) for an update of 6th District and City issues.

**When:** The 4th Saturday of the month  
(except December)

**Where:** Morris Restaurant,  
1014 N. West Street

**Time:** 9 am to 10 am

## **Visioning Wichita**

The Visioneering Wichita process has involved more than 9,000 regional citizens over the past five months. Planners collected more than 3,600 ideas from community meetings and categorized those ideas into 2,844 issues. Those issues are included in the final vision plan in the form of 158 strategies across six foundation areas: Education, Quality of Life, Economic Development, Infrastructure, Government and Private Sector Leadership.

The next step for the plan will be to start on the implementation process. That will involve having a variety of "vision partners" – groups willing to take on individual strategies to help reach the key benchmarks – come forward to officially adopt a part of the plan as their own.

Wichita Downtown Development Corporation has already agreed to

become a vision partner with the strategies outlined for downtown. The vision and strategies for downtown (about ½ of which is in District 6) are:

1. Make downtown a vibrant community and a destination point for our residents, visitors and businesses. Develop downtown to attract and retain singles and young educated people, giving them the desire to reside in the Wichita MSA. Provide more restaurants, attractions and other people amenities (housing, grocery stores, drugstores, medical, etc).
2. Build a downtown arena.
3. Offer incentives for inner city residential and business development.
4. Create a downtown business park with a focus on bio-medical and technology.
5. Eliminate problems caused by multiple ownerships of downtown land

and land-leases. This ownership pattern discourages renovation and redevelopment and makes land acquisition difficult. The city needs to make land available and eliminate barriers.

6. Provide convenient on and off-street parking.

There are a multitude of other visions and strategies for which neighborhoods and neighborhood associations would make good vision partners. These include many issues about our quality of life such as beautification projects, providing every child who needs one a mentor, encouraging infill housing on vacant lots, etc.

Please review the document and encourage groups with which you are associated to become vision partners.

Together we can make a great future for Wichita.